University Council Minutes
February 2, 2026
3:30 p.m.
2420 North End Center and Zoom

Present: Julie Ross (presiding), April Myers, Laurel Miner for Daniel Sui, Bryan Garey, Menah Pratt, Kim O'Rourke, Guru Ghosh, Aimée Suprenant, Jill Sible, Mary Burrows for Mario Ferruzzi, Daniel Givens, Laura Belmonte, Tsai Lu Liu, David Knight, Saone Sarker, Lee Learman, Amanda Morris, Jennifer Johnson, Justin Lemkul, Rachel Miles, James Hawdon, Marlena Lester, Gabe Petry, Jasmine Boyd, Emma Roshioru, Atharva Shashank Kokane for Aarav Parikh, Thomas Feely, Lindsay Ricci, Pooja Bhagawat, Gyang Chung, Taylor Peele, Katie Drinkwater Gregg, Marc Michel, Nicole Pitterson, Rodney Gaines, Kim Loeffert, Rebecca Hester, David Xie, Renée LeClair, Terri Pecora, Serena Young, Amber Robinson, Jennifer Clevenger, Jim Tokuhisa, and Jan Helge Bøhn

Absent with Notice: Tim Sands, Amy Sebring, Jennifer Jones, and Ronnie Mondal

Absent: Frances Keene, Kevin Pitts, Saskia van de Gevel, Tyler Walters, Rebecca Bott-Knutson, Nicole Connors, Amber Hagan, Eric Martin, Ron Meyers, and Clay Crumpler

Guests: Lori Rose, Dee Dee Somervell, Larry Cox, II, Janice Austin, Holli Gardner Drewry, Ron Fricker, Rachel Gabriele, Debbie Greer, Monique Logan, Sally Shupe, Rick Sparks, and Lauren Surface

Provost Julie Ross called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m. A quorum was present.

1. Announcement of Order of the Day

Dr. Ross announced the order of the day for the meeting. Items to be placed on the agenda must be submitted to the secretary at least ten days prior to the meeting date. Follow the procedures in Section 2(2) – University Council Bylaws, Article IX, Section 2(2-3).

2. Announcement of review and approval of minutes of December 1, 2025

Dr. Ross noted that these minutes have been voted on electronically and can be publicly accessed on the Governance Information System on the Web (http://www.governance.vt.edu).

3. Unfinished Business

Commission on Faculty Affairs
CFA Resolution 2025-26A
Resolution to Revise the Faculty Handbook Section on Appeal of Probationary Non-Reappointment Decision

Jim Hawdon presented the resolution for second reading and made a motion to approve. The motion was seconded, and the motion passed.

Commission on Faculty Affairs
CFA Resolution 2025-26C
Resolution to Revise Formal Grievance Procedure in the Faculty Handbook

Jim Hawdon presented the resolution for second reading and made a motion to approve. The motion was seconded, and the motion passed.

4. New Business

Commission on Faculty Affairs
CFA Resolution 2025-26B
Resolution to Revise Faculty Handbook to Defer Tenure Cases with Legal Entanglements

Jim Hawdon presented the resolution for first reading. This resolution proposes a revision to the Faculty Handbook addressing promotion and tenure cases involving unresolved legal matters. The resolution would allow a faculty member, at their discretion, to request that the provost defer making a recommendation to the President when a legal entanglement could affect the case. Any deferral would be granted in one-year increments, subject to the provost's approval, and once the legal matter is resolved, the provost would make a recommendation as soon as possible.

Discussion clarified that only the faculty member may initiate a request for deferral, that cases are expected to be evaluated solely on the contents of the dossier, and that existing grievance and appeal processes remain available if improper considerations occur at any point earlier in the promotion and tenure process. It was noted that legal counsel has reviewed the resolution.

Commission on Faculty Affairs
Resolution CFA 2025-26E
Resolution to Revise the Faculty Handbook Section on Instructor Ranks

Jim Hawdon presented the resolution for first reading. This resolution revises the Faculty Handbook by removing the five-year minimum completed service requirement before an instructor may be considered for promotion. It was noted that while departments may still choose to consider length of service, maintaining a university-level minimum could negatively affect faculty retention.

Commission on Graduate and Professional Studies and Policies
CGPSP Resolution 2025-26B
Resolution to Explore Alternative Curricular Avenues for Graduate Education Requirements

Renée LeClair presented the resolution for first reading. This resolution addresses exigent circumstances and their impact on graduate education. The resolution emphasizes exploring alternative curricular avenues to meet graduate education requirements while reaffirming that curriculum remains the purview of the faculty. Revisions to the resolution incorporated feedback from the Faculty Senate and reaffirms alignment with Virginia Tech's values and principles of shared community. Any alternative or new curricular approaches developed under this framework would comply with existing university guidelines and approval processes.

5. Reports from Commission Chairs

1. Commission on Administrative and Professional Faculty Affairs – Marlena Lester, AP Faculty Senate President

    a. Ongoing Grievance Determination Panels as needed.
    b. Determine status of Resolution 2023-24A and continue with governance process or remove from consideration.
    c. Complete annual review of Faculty Handbook section pertaining to AP Faculty (Chapter 7 and Section 2.29.3.1).
    d. Continued discussion of AP Faculty evaluation plan in PageUp pilot program.
    e. Complete resolution to update constituent areas of the AP Faculty Senate.

2. Commission on Faculty Affairs – Jim Hawdon, Chair

    a. Evaluate School of Medicine representation in Faculty Senate.
    b. Review collegiate faculty series, including the description of, duties performed by, and promotion process.
    c. Clarify Faculty Handbook section on additional compensation.
    d. Clarify Faculty Handbook section on part-time appointment for pre-tenured faculty.
    e. Clarify promotion expectations for non-Tenure Track faculty.
    f. Update and consolidate Faculty handbook sections on conflict of interest and conflict of commitment.
    g. Adding a section to the Faculty Handbook on grievances involving graduate and professional students.
    h. Revise the sanctions section of the Faculty Handbook to add minor sanctions.

3. Commission on Graduate and Professional Student Affairs – Aimée Surprenant, Advisor

    a. Recommend policy and administrative changes to graduate programs from the results of the GPSS-Graduate School Climate Survey 2024-25.
    b. Implement cultural/administrative changes following the recommendations from the CGPSP Working Group on the new grievance process for graduate/professional students.
    c. Build up training modules and programs for students to take part in the panels for the grievance process, complementary to Goal b listed above.
    d. Consider amending Policy 8012 or writing a new policy to create a separate classification of student organizations for student senates.

4. Commission on Graduate and Professional Studies and Policies, Renée LeClair

    a. Operational
        - Consider collaboration and engagement of other commissions in specific activities when needed in shared governance, specifically CGPSA.

    b. Responsive
        - Review Task Force recommendations and evaluate how recommendations impact Graduate and Professional studies.

- Other actions as they come up.

c. Proactive
d. Review graduate certificate programs and determine enrollment and usage data.
   - Looking at sundowning unused courses.
   - Reviewing graduate policies.
   - Examining non-thesis master's programming.

5. Commission on Outreach and International Affairs – Jennifer Clevenger, Chair

   a. Explore potential for a Lifelong Learner Institute (or center) to provide innovative courses and credentialing opportunities, particularly for those in our region.
   b. Explore opportunities to be a Global Campus, utilizing specialized platforms to share courses with students and partner institutions.
   c. Explore ramifications of federal immigration issues on enrollment management and graduate student research. What are the risks and realities affecting the VT talent pipeline?
   d. Develop a university-wide definition for engagement with the assistance of the Engagement Leadership Council and Carnegie Reclassification.

6. Commission on Research – Jan Helge Bøhn

   a. Five-year review of university center: Institute for Critical Technology and Applied Science (ICTAS) was completed Fall 2025.
   b. Five-year review of university center: Virginia Tech Transportation Institute (VTTI) tentative for Spring 2026.
   c. In support of Virginia Tech Global Distinction, envision and design fellowships to bring globally distinguished faculty to campus.
   d. Postdocs in governance (e.g., as a standing committee within the Commission on Research).
   e. Changes to the Faculty Handbook to reflect changes to research faculty structure.

7. Commission on Staff Policies and Affairs – Gabe Petry, Chair

   a. Address the lack of bereavement leave for staff using benchmarking to form a proposal to support a resolution.
   b. Increase non-student wage and staff visibility and inclusion in steering committees and high-level searches.
   c. Improve support, availability, and opportunities for professional development and disbursement of funds.
   d. Study current telework expectations, eligibility, and efficacy to support transparency and possible recommendations for policy updates.

8. Commission on Undergraduate Student Affairs – Atharva Shashank Kokane, member

    a. Review and approve UCSO Constitutions.
    b. Ideate and advocate for policies and programs to enhance the undergraduate experience.
    c. Lead discussions regarding university policy related to formation, dissolution, and operations of UCSOs.
    d. Interface with other shared governance entities to ensure complete and accurate representation of the undergraduate student body.
    e. Serve as a collaborative platform between undergraduate students and other university stakeholders.

9. Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies – Jim Tokihusa, Chair

    a. Continue to identify barriers to student success present in university policies, the Undergraduate Course Catalog, and other documents pertaining to undergraduate studies and policies (revision of Policy 6815).
    b. Identify and address policies that will be impacted by the adoption of Banner SaaS (the enterprise resource planning system for the university) and offer changes that enhance student success (revision to PPM 107).
    c. Formulate a policy on university text messaging for student academic correspondence and advising.
    d. Propose the foreign language requirements for admission be applied and enforced at admission.
    e. Explore a two-day Fall Break.
    f. Establish a timeline for Pathways revisions.

6. Announcement of approval and posting of UC Cabinet, Commission, and Committee Minutes

These minutes have been voted on electronically and will be posted on the University web (http://www.governance.vt.edu). Note that the purpose of voting on minutes of the University Council Cabinet, Commissions, and Committees reporting to University Council Cabinet is to accept them for filing. University Council Bylaws require that policy items be brought forward in resolution form for University Council action.

- Commission on Administrative and Professional Faculty Affairs
  October 10, 2025
  November 14, 2025

- Commission on Faculty Affairs
  October 31, 2025

- Commission on Graduate and Professional Student Affairs
  October 8, 2025
  November 12, 2025

- Commission on Graduate and Professional Studies and Policies
  November 19, 2025
  December 3, 2025

- Commission on Outreach and International Affairs
  November 20, 2025
  December 4, 2025

- Commission on Research
  October 9, 2025
  November 13, 2025

- Commission on Staff Policies and Affairs
  November 6, 2025

- Commission on Undergraduate Student Affairs
  November 7, 2025
  November 21, 2025

- Campus Development Committee
  November 4, 2025

- Climate Action, Sustainability, and Energy Committee
  October 27, 2025

- Transportation and Parking Committee
  September 9, 2025

6. Adjournment

There being no further business, a motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 3:59 p.m.

University Council Voting – February 2, 2026

First name	Last name	Do you approve CFA Resolution 2025-26A?	Do you approve CFA Resolution 2025-26C?
Laura	Belmonte	Yes	Yes
Pooja	Bhagawat	Yes	Yes
Jasmine	Boyd	Yes	Yes
Gyang	Chung	Yes	Yes
Jennifer	Clevenger	Yes	Yes
Katherine	Drinkwater Gregg	Yes	Yes
Thomas	Feely	Yes	Yes
Rodney	Gaines	Yes	Yes
Dan	Givens	Yes	Yes
James	Hawdon	Yes	Yes
Rebecca	Hester	Yes	Yes
Jennifer	Johnson	Yes	Yes
Atharva Shashank	Kokane	Abstain	Abstain
Lee	Learman	Yes	Yes
Renee	LeClair	Yes	Yes
Justin	Lemkul	Yes	Yes
Lu	Liu	Yes	Yes
Kimberly	Loeffert	Yes	Yes
Marlena	McGlothlin Lester	Yes	Yes
Marc	Michel	Yes	Yes
Rachel	Miles	Yes	Yes
Laurel	Miner	Yes	Yes
Amanda	Morris	Yes	Yes
Terri	Pecora	Yes	Yes
Taylor	Peele		Yes
Gabe	Petry	Yes	Yes
Nicole	Pitterson	Yes	Yes
Menah	Pratt	Yes	Yes
Lindsay	Ricci	Yes	Yes
Amber	Robinson	Yes	Yes
Emma	Roshioru	Yes	Yes
Saonee	Sarker	Yes	Yes
Jill	Sible	Yes	Yes
Aimee	Surprenant	Yes	Yes
Hehuang	Xie	Yes	Yes
Serena	Young	Yes	Yes
Kim	O'Rourke	Yes	Yes
Bryan	Garey	Yes	Yes
David	Knight		
Guru	Ghosh		